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VI.—SPENSER'S *MUIOPOTMOS* AS AN ALLEGORY

Most readers of Spenser's *Muiopotmos* will recall Professor Palgrave's comments upon the poem in his essays on *The Minor Poem of Spenser*. He said in part: "The lyric regarded from this point of view, is as light and fanciful, as winged and ethereal, as Clarion himself: the sunshine of the Summer's day which it describes glitters through it: the musical ripple of rhyme and metre is unbroken." Then, finding but a fantastically slight connection between the episodes of the tapestries and the story of Clarion, Mr. Palgrave further summed up his comment upon the poem: "The tale hence seems even more inconsecutive than Mother Hubbard's; it neither is a whole as a story, an allegory, nor a moralization; and one asks in what humour a poet so sage and serious as Spenser, an artist so finished, can have painted this picture?—a question for sufficient answer to which he might have pointed triumphantly to the exquisiteness with which the fairy web is wrought and embroidered; to the poet's right, now and then, to be fancy free."¹

We have, I believe, kept too closely and too traditionally to Palgrave's view. And modern critics, led by the older commentators to a superficial reading of the poem, have emphasized the fancy and exquisiteness of it at the expense of its content, real body, and allegorical intention. Accordingly we have accepted such comment as Mr. Dodge's: "Its subject is a mere nothing: it tells no story that could not be told in full in a stanza, it presents no situation for the delicate rhetoric of the emotions: it is a mere running

¹ *The Minor Poems of Spenser*, in Grosart's *Spenser*, vol. iv, pp. lxx-lxxi.

frieze of images and scenes, linked in fanciful continuity, etc." ²

It is not necessary to review all of the theories and suggestions about *Muiopotmos*. Mr. Nadal has done that thoroughly in his article, *Spenser's Muiopotmos in Relation to Chaucer's Sir Thopas and the Nun's Priest's Tale*,³ although his report is colored by his own point of view. And Mr. Percy Long, in the latest attempt at an interpretation,⁴ refers to Mr. Nadal's work and makes further record of critical comment. I shall refer therefore to but one earlier commentator, whose suggestion if later interpreters had followed, instead of the tradition set up by Palgrave, Lowell, and others, they would have come more nearly to a real understanding of what was in Spenser's mind when he wrote *Muiopotmos*. Professor Craik, in his comment upon the poem says, first of the date, that it "is, unlike the other pieces, dated 1590, and has therefore been supposed to have been previously published by itself in that year. If there was any such edition, however, no copy, we believe, is now known to exist. The date, 1590, if not a typographical error, may possibly have been prefixed to indicate the real events of which there can scarcely, we think, be a doubt that the poem is a veiled representation, although the commentators give no help toward solving the riddle, nor indeed any hint that there is a riddle to be solved." And later, in his running comment: "The narrative thus solemnly introduced [referring to the two opening stanzas which later commentators persist in ignoring] can hardly be a mere story of a spider and a fly."⁵ Professor Hales, in his brief remarks upon *Muiopotmos*,

² *Spenser's Works*, Cambridge Edition, pp. 115-116.

³ *Publications of the Modern Lang. Assn.*, vol. xxv (1910).

⁴ *Modern Language Review*, October, 1914.

⁵ *Spenser and His Poetry*, vol. III, pp. 172-3.

appears to follow Craik's suggestion and says that the poem "would seem to be an allegorical narrative of some matter recently transpired." ⁶

Professor Craik's view, which Mr. Nadal thinks is wholly unwarranted, I shall try to prove a correct one and entirely justifiable by the text of the poem, as Mr. Nadal's is not. Mr. Nadal's introductory remarks, like Mr. Dodge's, reflect the influence of the Palgrave comments above-mentioned. "*Muiopotmos*," he says, "has long been a puzzle to the readers of Spenser. A poem of fantastic beauty, built upon a trifle as a subject, a light and fanciful story of over four hundred lines with no apparent lesson or moral, *Muiopotmos* is altogether so unlike 'our sage and serious Spenser' that critics have been baffled in their efforts to account for it." ⁷

In his examination of the possible allegorical interpretations of *Muiopotmos* Mr. Nadal discards Lowell's suggestion that the poet is symbolizing himself as a poet because "To reign in the air was certainly Spenser's function." ⁸ Such a theory he says "does not carry us far and reduces the allegory to a vanishing point," as it certainly does. Mr. Nadal is right, so far as he goes, in making the point of the poem not the "reigning in the air" but "the tragic end which overtakes Clarion." He even refers to the opening of the poem as indicating this tragic end. If only Mr. Nadal had read all of the lines of the two opening stanzas and applied them as he applied the phrases selected, he might, alas, have had no theory to propound.

Mr. Nadal objects to Professor Craik's suggestion that the poem is a veiled representation of real events or, in the words of Professor Hales, "an allegorical narrative of

⁶ *The Globe Spenser*, Introduction, p. xlvi.

⁷ *Publications of the Mod. Lang. Assn.*, vol. xxv, p. 640.

⁸ *Lowell's Works*, Houghton, Mifflin & Company, vol. iv, p. 313.

some matter recently transpired," because they offer no opinion or suggestion as to whom the matter concerns. He dismisses this theory, he says, "on the ground that it really has no solution to propose. It goes no further than to say that the poem *must* mean something, *must* have some allegorical significance, because it 'can hardly be a mere story of a spider and a fly.' Just why it cannot be, we are not told, except that it is too solemnly introduced." If Mr. Nadal had read carefully all the lines of the "solemn introduction," he might have found some answer to his "why?"

I propose to complete or make definite Professor Craik's suggestion about the poem and to answer Mr. Nadal's objection to interpreting it as allegory, by offering an "opinion or suggestion as to whom the matter concerns." Mr. Nadal also says that "if allegory, it is quite unlike Spenser. Whatever else his allegories may be, they are not obscure." It will be the purpose of this paper also to show that the allegory is no more obscure than Spenser's other allegories, is in fact perfectly clear and quite after his characteristic allegorical method.

In considering the meaning, immediate source, and inspiration of *Muiopotmos* we are not concerned with Spenser's literary models or sources, but with the source of the idea as found in contemporary events and people. We shall not therefore further discuss Mr. Nadal's theory except as it stands in our way. Surely we all know that Spenser was familiar with Chaucer, and Mr. Greenlaw has convincingly shown that he knew and used the mediaeval *Renard the Fox* cycle in his *Mother Hubberds Tale*. But Mr. Greenlaw is careful to insist that Spenser is "too great and too original to follow slavishly his source" and that his debt to his sources is "the suggestion to a bright mind of the usefulness of the *Renard* material as a means

of satirizing the life of the time.”⁹ Mr. Greenlaw’s articles on *Mother Hubberds Tale* are not indeed more striking for their revelation of Spenser’s method of using literary sources and models than for making more evident the fact that the poet’s eye was sharply fixed upon his time—upon the figures and life of Queen Elizabeth’s Court, upon the political actions of his friends and, we may add, his enemies.

Muiopotmos was composed probably early in 1590, as the title page indicates, when Spenser’s mind was most preoccupied with the life at Court, when it was with him vividly as fact and experience. And *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, containing another record of the impression made upon him by his experience at Court, was written but a year later, as his dedicatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh indicates. Nor did he outgrow, after *Mother Hubberds Tale* and *Colin Clout*, the disposition to keep his eye closely upon the Court figures and the affairs of his contemporaries, and to reflect them in his poetry. No one can read the later books of *The Faerie Queene* with a fresh impression of the time and the main events and figures without realizing that they are more specific and that the allegory is more definitely significant of the actions and conduct of the real figures selected than is the allegory of the earlier books. Spenser did not lose his tendency to portray contemporary life in fanciful allegory, which was his natural habitat, and the visit to the Court in 1589-1590 with Sir Walter Raleigh would but increase, not only his natural tendency to use contemporary material in allegory, but also his interest in this material of the Court.

However, we might believe that Spenser cast aside his

⁹ *Modern Philology*, January, 1905.

nature for once and, when in the midst of Court life in its most fascinating complexity, wrote a poem of pure fancy, if there were no internal evidences of the allegory. But certainly he would write no such school-boy exercise as Mr. Nadal would have us believe it. The exquisite Clarion is not a patch-work or piecing together of the figure of Sir Thopas and, "having exhausted the lines" of this mock-heroic, of Chaucer's Chanteceleer. It would be pathetically humorous indeed if Spenser could be imagined at so servile a task, even in his days of earliest apprenticeship. To consider the poem under such a process of construction is to take from it its congruity and its internal consistency, to lose entirely the creative vision of the poet. So also does such an interpretation as that attempted by Mr. Long. Both of these theories entirely ignore the signification of the two introductory stanzas, which direct the reader with a certainty to things of contemporary interest, and indeed to "an allegorical narrative of some matter recently transpired."

Mr. Long has characterized Mr. Nadel's argument as "unconvincing." I am inclined to honor his with the same epithet and pass it by. It is even less convincing that Mr. Nadal's, "that Spenser in *Muiopotmos* represents his captivity to the charms of Lady Carey." Mr. Long does admit that "To figure his beloved as a spider—a 'cursed creature'—in a poem dedicated to herself may appear indeed to require a 'milde construction.'" And he warns us against pressing the parallel too far, as well he may, since both spider and butterfly are male. He ignores, not only the directing stanzas of the introduction, but also the entire story and central idea of a hapless butterfly swept into the web of *Envy*, not *Love*. His parallels are not parallels of the situation of the poem, but mere similes or metaphors in which the method of a spider or

the fabric of the web is compared. He makes no use of anything else in the poem, of the incidents or parts of the story, and merely centers attention upon a metaphoric conceit. Again, Mr. Long would have profited by a careful reading of the first two stanzas of the poem, with which it is only fair that we should refresh the reader's mind, since we have so insisted upon their importance.

I sing of deadly dolorous debate,
 Stir'd up through wrathfull Nemesis despight,
 Betwixt two mightie ones of great estate,
 Drawne into armes, and prooffe of mortall fight,
 Through prowd ambition and hartswelling hate,
 Whilest neither could the others greater might
 And sdeignfull scorne endure; that from small jarre
 Their wraths at length broke into open warre.

The roote whereof and tragicall effect,
 Vouchsafe, O thou the mournfulst Muse of nyne,
 That wontst the tragick stage for to direct,
 In funerall complaints and wayfull tyne,
 Reveale to me, and all the meanes detect
 Through which sad Clarion did at last declyne
 To lowest wretchednes: And is there then
 Such rancour in the harts of mightie men?¹⁰

According to these lines the poet has in mind some "dolorous debate" between two prominent persons who have been "drawne into armes." These two have been led by their ambition and hatred from "small jars" or bickerings to a state in which neither could endure the scorn and might of the other, and finally they come to some proof of their strife in an attempt at arms. The poet then beseeches the tragic muse to reveal the root or cause by which Clarion, presumably one of the "two of great estate," fell "to lowest wretchednes"; and he closes the stanzas with the significant question, "can such hatred be

¹⁰ *Spenser's Poems*, Cambridge Edition, p. 116.

in the hearts of mighty men"? Our questions are: Who were the "two of great estate"? who was Clarion? what was the notorious feud?

Spenser, we know, during the summer of 1589, but a few months at the most before the writing of the poem, had received the visits of Sir Walter Raleigh at his home in Ireland; and after the intimate acquaintance recorded in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, had returned with Sir Walter to England in the autumn of 1589 and been introduced to the Court. There he saw for himself things that he had known only by hearsay before. Raleigh, in their summer intimacy, if we may trust the account of it in *Colin Clout*, had told his friend all his troubles. Here we may anticipate our account of Sir Walter Raleigh by mention of the event which seems to be directly referred to in the first stanza of *Muiopotmos*. Hostilities, begun in 1587, between the young Earl of Essex and Sir Walter Raleigh, broke out afresh on their return to Court after the expedition to Portugal, and culminated in December, 1588, in Essex's challenging Raleigh to a duel, which the Council prevented and kept secret from the Queen.¹¹ The first stanza of the poem pictures the relations of the two at this time with peculiar definiteness, as we shall see later.

Raleigh then went to Ireland, driven from the Court by Essex and his friends and somewhat out of favor with the Queen. There Spenser, in the intimate conversations of the visits, learned Raleigh's side of the matter, of which he had doubtless heard before. And we may imagine him, on his entrance to the Court circle with Sir Walter, a sympathetic but curious observer of the situation, anxious

¹¹ W. Stebbing, *Life of Sir Walter Raleigh*, p. 69; E. Gosse, *Life of Sir Walter Raleigh*, p. 40.

indeed to find the source of his friend's distresses. The cause he found quickly, as the story of *Muiopotmos* clearly tells, in the hateful envy of Raleigh's rivals, of whom the young Earl of Essex was the tool.¹² But envy does not kill physically and the tragic fate of Clarion in the web of Aragnoll figures, or more accurately prefigures, not the real "death of a young courtier," but the fateful career of Sir Walter Raleigh in "the gardins" of the Court, where he was the prey of a virulent envy which even at this time may be regarded as fully operative and marked by inevitableness.

That we may have a clearer impression of the organic nature, real connectiveness, and purport of the story than is granted us by the commentators, it seems best to summarize the poem.

The young Clarion, of royal lineage, hoped by his old father to be worthy of his throne, disdained to remain at home in "loathsome sloth" or waste his hours in ease, and early set out to explore, not only his father's lands, but the higher regions of the air, the rivers, and the crystal sky, and "oft would dare to tempt the troublous winde."

But this adventurous butterfly, in his "vauntful lusti-head," was still unsatisfied and set about to "fare abroad." So, arming himself in full and appropriate armour, butterfly as he was, he made ready to set out upon further adventures. After the description of the butterfly armour and the gorgeous wings, the poet stops to tell the story of Clarion's ancestry. His mother was the nymph Astery, whom Venus out of jealousy had transformed into a butterfly, the flowers which she had collected in her lap being transformed into the beautiful colors of her wings. So, in ex-

¹² W. Stebbing, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, pp. 61-62; E. Gosse, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 35; Oldys, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 84.

quisite armour and with his "shinie wings painted with thousand colours," the young Clarion set out on his adventures. But after trying all the delights, exploring woods, rivers, meadows, mountains, he still was unsatisfied. All these pleasures, however sweet, did not please his fancy or "cause him to abide." And now,

To the gay gardins his unstaide desire
Him wholly caried, to refresh his sprights.

There he tastes all the pleasures, sucks every sweet, tastes at will of every "vertue of the gardin good or ill" and when he has "fed his fill, embays himself in the warm sun,"

And there him rests in riotous suffisaunce
Of all his gladfulness and kingly joy-aunce.

But nothing "can long abide in state"; foreordained by the heavens was a cruel fate for the hapless young fly. A wicked creature, "foe of faire things and the author of confusion," the venomous spider, Aragnoll, whose mother was Arachne, had built his mansion in the gardens and soon spied the joyous butterfly flitting here and there, free, careless, unsuspecting of foe or danger. The envious creature set to work to weave his web to snare the hapless, careless fly, who, once entangled, struggled all in vain to free himself and in his struggles became all the more entangled in the meshes of the snare. At last he was at the mercy of his envious foe, who rushed out of his den and seized and greedily destroyed him.

And now let us follow the fortunes of the young Walter Raleigh up to the time indicated by the introduction of Spenser's poem. However silent later historians may be as to his high lineage, or whether it can be proved, Raleigh was believed by himself, and probably by his friend Spenser, to be of royal descent—descended, as his Devonshire

friend and relative John Hooker told him, from the Plantagenets through the house of Clare.¹³ The genealogical information searched out by Hooker for his young friend was contested by Sir William Pole, another Devonshire antiquary of the time, and the older historians admit that there is no obtaining the absolute fact, since all the genealogies are conflicting. But it seems altogether probable that, in the intimate visits of the summer of 1589, Sir Walter had confided the information to his friend, even if Spenser had not read Hooker's *Epistle*, which was published in 1587. In this dedicatory address the old antiquary not only imparts to Sir Walter the information about his royal ancestry, but reviews his entire life, and uses the whole as the text for an exhortation to the young courtier. We shall refer more definitely to the whole later.

Although very little is positively known about Walter Raleigh's youngest days, we are certain of an active, restless curiosity and energy, and an early development. We find him very early, like the young Clarion, arming himself for adventure, not content to stay at home and finish his academic career at Oxford, but leaving college and setting out for the campaigns¹⁴ in France at the age barely of seventeen, younger if the date 1554 instead of 1552 is accepted for his birth. The young Walter had taken the opportunity, probably offered by his young kinsman Henry Champernoun, who had been given the privilege by Queen Elizabeth of raising "a troop of a hundred mounted gentlemen volunteers for the Protestant side." But with his

¹³ E. Edwards, *Life of Sir Walter Raleigh*, vol. I, pp. 2-5; *Epistle Dedicatory of John Hooker to Sir Walter Raleigh Knight, etc., Holinshed*, vol. VI, p. 101. Oldys, *Life and Works of Sir W. Raleigh*, vol. I, pp. 87-88.

¹⁴ W. Stebbing, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, pp. 9-10.

characteristic energy and audacity, he anticipated the advent of the troops in France and reached there before Champernoun and his men, in time to have part in prominent battles and in the Huguenot retreat of 1569. He is thought to have remained in France about six years, between the years of seventeen and twenty-three. Then he served, probably from 1577 to 1578, in the Netherlands with Sir John Norris under the Prince of Orange, although he was in England between 1576 and 1578, probably, as Mr. Stebbing thinks, visiting his family and his half brother Sir Humphrey Gilbert who was at this time a commander in the English army.

He was back from his adventures in France, searching for advancement in London and enjoying life to the full, one may believe from the anecdotes of the period, if good gossip Aubrey is to be trusted. At any rate, Mr. Stebbing says it is on record that he was committed to Fleet with Sir Thomas Perrot for six days.¹⁵ How early the privateering adventures began we are not made certain by historians, but in 1577-78 he was active with Sir Humphrey Gilbert and had probably obtained the means for his already noticeable social extravagances by this "west country art of privateering." He had by this time, as shown by his later correspondence, become known to Walsingham and Burghley, and had come into some "good means of allying himself" with Leicester.

In 1580 he was commissioned as captain of a hundred foot-soldiers to go against the insurgents at Munster and their Spanish and Italian confederates. He was with Lord Grey's army in November, 1580. In this Irish service the young adventurer found his curiosity, daring, and headlong energy satisfied, at least for a time. Mr. Stebbing says

¹⁵ *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, pp. 11-17.

that he was "indefatigable" and "shunned no toil or danger, caring not if the enemy were five or twenty to one."¹⁶ And the old continuator of *Holinshed* shows great zest and vividness in recounting his acts of coolness and courage.¹⁷

But Raleigh's curious energy and love of activity were not long satisfied in Ireland. Although there is every evidence that he enjoyed his part in the brutal policy he was aiding, at least so long as he was acting upon his own initiative, he soon became restless and dissatisfied with Lord Grey's policy and began correspondence with Walsingham and Leicester for his return. So he was sent home by Lord Grey in December, 1581, and made the notable visit to the Court upon which his entire career turned when, whether by the casting of his plush cloak before his mistress in the muddy way or by some introduction of Leicester or Sussex, he leapt into the Queen's good graces there to stay, although at great hazard, for a number of years; chosen by her as her own servant, not only for her pleasure in his personal attractions, but for his sagacity, his greater understanding, and his rarer gifts.¹⁸ So,

To the gay gardins his unstaid desire

had carried him, and there he sucked to his fill the sweets and the "vertues, good or ill that grew in this gardin," until he, too sure, too careless, was swept into the hideous web of Envy prepared for him.

Raleigh's charm of manner and person, and higher gifts of versatility and intelligence, all helped to raise him quickly in the Queen's favor over Leicester and Hatton, her favorites heretofore. And he had more influence with the Queen than these intriguing favorites, for his power lay in

¹⁶ *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁷ *Holinshed* (London, 1808), vol. vi, pp. 441-442.

¹⁸ W. Stebbing, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, pp. 26-30.

his marvelous capacity and headlong courage and energy and in the open sincerity of a franker, more powerful nature which it pleased the Queen to know she was mistress of. For a few years then, few indeed, from 1582 to 1587, he tasted to the full all the sweets of royal favor. And he had a gift, as had his symbolic representative in Spenser's poem, for enjoying with frankest pleasure every activity that his versatility, courage, intelligence, and vanity found out for him.

Although his early activities were not definitely honored for some time by official position, still there is every evidence that from early 1582 he held an enviable position in the Queen's favor and was accepted among her counsellors, while he also enjoyed the honor of advising Burghley and having his advice noted by the Lord Treasurer. In 1584 he was elected a member for Devonshire and was knighted in the early part of the same year. In 1585 he became Warden of the Stannaries, and afterwards was appointed to the Lieutenancy of Cornwall and the Vice-Admiralty of the Counties of Cornwall and Devonshire. And later, in 1586, he received the most signal token of the Queen's favor by being appointed Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard, an office held for several years by her favorite, Sir Christopher Hatton, in conjunction with the office of Vice-Chamberlain. And this favor looked apparently, says Mr. Stebbing, toward the Vice-Chamberlainship, since Sir Christopher had been made Lord Chancellor. These offices, it is true, carried no pay and Raleigh was left to gain his pecuniary advancement in other ways, which at any rate brought into play the aforesaid wit and energy in which he abounded. Finally, in 1586, he received the Irish Grant, with its twelve thousand acres and other shares and privileges. And in 1587 he added English estates to his Irish, obtaining by confiscation lands in Lincolnshire,

Derbyshire, and Notts, together with the confiscated goods and personalities.

I quote from Mr. Stebbing at this point in the career of this remarkable "butterfly of fortune."

"Five years separated the needy Munster captain from the Lord Warden of the Stannaries, the magnificent Captain of the Queen's guard, the owner of broad lands in England and Irish seignories. He had climbed high, though not so high as the insignificant Hatton. He had progressed fast, though another was soon to beat him in swiftness of advancement. He had gathered wealth and power. He was profuse in the application of both. Much of his gains went in ostentation. He was fond of exquisite armour, gorgeous raiment, lace, embroideries, furs, diamonds, and great pearls." ¹⁹

Add to this picture that of the person of the brilliant young courtier, tall, splendidly handsome with "the general aspect of ascendancy," an indomitable energy, will and wit, and a frank and free almost incontinent desire for all good things whether of power, labor, peril, strife, or the sensuous delights and gorgeousness of the "gay gardins"—and we have the Raleigh whom Spenser and others of his time saw rushing heedlessly on, in his lust for even richer fields to enjoy, into the snare of his enemies. With this picture in mind, Spenser's introductory stanzas and the allegory of the career of the joyous young Clarion and his enticement into the web of Envy are all too clear.

Already by 1587 ²⁰ the mutterings of popular envy are caught along with the detractions of rivals and the note of unwholesome though romantic scandal among the multi-

¹⁹ *Life of Sir Walter Raleigh*, pp. 39-40.

²⁰ W. Stebbing, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, pp. 58-61; *Holinshed*, Hooker's *Dedication*, vol. VI, p. 101; E. Gosse, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, pp. 32-35; Oldys, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 83-84.

tude about his rich estates, his colonizing schemes, the Virginia plantation, and the new plants, fruits, and flowers which he had introduced. Mr. Stebbing says: "Apolo-gists and impartial chroniclers are as distinct as enemies in intimating that he was a constant mark for 'detractions' and 'envyings.'" Yet it was by his most admirable qualities, from a modern point of view, that he gained the universal hatred which he attracted from all sides; his superior wit, independent energy and activity, and his frank, lusty enjoyment in using them made him by 1587 "the best hated man of the world, in Court, city and country,"²¹ and swept him into that hideous web of envy and malice from which, the remaining thirty years of his life, he struggled to disentangle himself, after the fashion of Spenser's Clarion.

But it was with more than popular envy that Raleigh had to contend. He was continually at the mercy of envious, deceitful rivals in whose way he stood and in whom he roused bitter hatred, in spite of his own frank and generous attitude toward them. And, as we have said before, it was in the young Earl of Essex, who appeared at Court in 1587 and instantly became a favorite, that these envious rivals found their willing tool.²² It is not difficult to see how, when he appeared upon the scene, he found a quick and easy way to favor, not only by his petulant self-assurance and vanity and his capacity for ingratiation, but also because of the popular aversion to the favorite Sir Walter Raleigh. Mr. Stebbing again says:²³ "The popular attitude towards Essex is the solitary exception to the rule of the national abhorrence of favorites. It is explained as

²¹ W. Stebbing, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 61.

²² W. Stebbing, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, pp. 61-62; E. Gosse, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 35; Oldys, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 84.

²³ W. Stebbing, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, pp. 61-62.

much by the dislike of Raleigh as by Essex's ingratiating characteristics. Animosity against Raleigh stimulated the courtiers and the populace to sing in chorus the praises of the step-son of the hated Leicester. No anger was exhibited at the elevation of a lad of twenty to the Mastership of the Horse. Stories of the Queen's supposed infatuation, how she 'kept him at cards, or one game or another the whole night, and he cometh not to his lodgings till birds sing in the morning,' amused and did not incense."

The vain, impetuous youth quickly caught at this popular aversion and played upon it. He pettishly and insolently demanded of the Queen that his hated rival be put out of his way, and used every opportunity to insult Raleigh.²⁴ Finally, after the return from the Portugal expedition, upon which both Raleigh and Essex had gone, Raleigh was, before the end of summer, again immersed in bickerings with Essex. And now, in December 1588, the insolent young favorite challenged Raleigh to a duel, for some unknown but such slight grievance as he is known to have used in the case of Lord Mountjoy.²⁵ The Council interposed in the case of Raleigh, averting the combat and endeavoring to suppress the fact from the Queen, "lest it might injure the Earl." Mr. Stebbing says in this connection that "the two could be bound over to keep the peace. They could not be reconciled. Too many indiscreet or malignant partisans were interested in inflaming the conflict." And in the spring of 1589 Raleigh quitted the Court for the West and Ireland, where Spenser met him in the summer of that year. Of this act Captain Francis Allen wrote to Anthony Bacon in August, 1589:

²⁴ E. Gosse, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 35; W. Stebbing, *see note above*.

²⁵ *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, pp. 69-70; E. Gosse, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 40.

"My Lord of Essex hath chased Mr. Raleigh from the Court and hath confined him into Ireland."²⁸ This, of course, was Essex's boast to his friends, and Mr. Stebbing thinks was not accurate, because Raleigh was able to return after his visit of a few months to Munster. And Raleigh himself took occasion to deny the charge in a letter to his cousin George Carew in December, 1589. However, Spenser's evidence in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, based upon the confidences of the summer visits, indicates very certainly that Raleigh was out of favor with his Queen, and the lines also imply that the great Cynthia had been induced to abate her displeasure and take her favorite to her grace again.

It is to these events, then, and to this quarrel that I believe Spenser is alluding in the introductory stanza of *Muiopotmos*. The lines very definitely sum up the events and the situation in 1588-89—the intense, scornful, unendurable hatred of the two, and its culmination in the challenge. The second stanza intimates even more of the state of mind of the poet with reference to the affair. He had received the story from Raleigh evidently in the intimate talks of the summer before; but now, visiting the Court with his friend and meeting as friends the rivals and enemies of Raleigh, he must have been struck by the reality of the situation and curious of its source. We may infer perhaps by the analogy of his earlier works, *The Shepherdes Calender* and *Mother Hubberds Tale*, that Spenser was led by impulse to defend his friend and administer a light rebuke to his enemies, or felt impelled to warn Raleigh of the impending danger. In studying the situation he found, as we also gather from the historians, that Essex

²⁸ W. Stebbing, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, pp. 69-70; E. Gosse, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 42.

was only manipulated as an engine and that all the forces of envy and hate were turned against Raleigh. But he accepted the popular attitude too finally and, like Raleigh's enemies, prophesied the inevitable too soon. Mr. Stebbing says, "The rank and file at Elizabeth's Court had a keen scent for their sovereign's bias. They foresaw the inevitable end, though they antedated by several years the actual catastrophe."²⁷ So did Spenser.

As to the time of the poem, so far as indicated by the events it refers to, I believe Craik is right in his conjecture that the individual date 1590 was prefixed to the poem, although it was published with the other poems of the volume *Complaints* in 1591, because 1590 was a better date to which to refer the "real events" indicated by the introduction. Indeed, early 1590, if not late 1589, would seem to be the most significant time for its composition. After the Earl of Essex's temporary fall from favor because of his secret marriage in April, 1590, Sir Walter Raleigh was, till his own downfall because of his marriage in 1592, in very good favor with the Queen and uppermost at Court, at least during the few months of Essex's retirement. There was at any rate no appropriateness in the date 1591. This, I think, Spenser indicated by the particular date 1590.

The poem, then, in view of these facts, "light and airy" as it is, because it tells the story of a butterfly, and mock-heroic perhaps, at least in a sense, since Spenser could not realize how fatefully true his allegory was to be,—is an illuminating picture of the career of Sir Walter Raleigh in "the gay gardins" of Queen Elizabeth's Court. The introductory stanzas remarkably summarize the relations of the Earl of Essex and Sir Walter Raleigh during the

²⁷ *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 63.

years from 1587 to 1590. The second stanza indicates that the poet is not intending to deal with the relations of the two personally, but that he will select one of the rivals and show that hate and envy caused his downfall. Admitting the significance of the introductory stanzas and their applicability, we cannot fail to find the poem as a whole definitely allegorical.

It is not according to Spenser's method to carry his allegory too far or to give it a very literal application. But the story of the career of the young butterfly is marvelously suggestive of the career of the young Walter Raleigh to one who has a well defined picture of the first half of Raleigh's life in mind. First, as I have called attention to the point before, the young "flie," rather oddly if there is no signification in the detail, is of royal lineage and is the "fruitfull hope" of his old father's aged breast that his heir will prove worthy of his heritage. This cannot be taken literally, as indeed Spenser did not intend a literal interpretation of any of his allegorical genealogies.²⁸ But it almost obviously looks to Hooker's exhortation to the young Sir Walter when he tells him that he has come to retrieve his family's ancient name and honor and must be worthy of his trust. Compare the following from Hooker's *Dedication*: "Wherefore you are so much the more to be carefull to restore the house of your decaied forefathers to their ancient honour and nobilitie, which in this later age hath beene obscured, abiding the time by you to be restored to their first and primer state,"²⁹ and other like passages.

²⁸ Compare the genealogy of Marinell, who clearly represents Sir Walter Raleigh, *Faerie Queene*, Bk. III, Canto iv, and Bk. iv, Canto xii. There is an interesting likeness in the characters of Clarion and Marinell.

²⁹ Dedicatory Epistle to Sir Walter Raleigh Knight, etc., *Holinshed*, vol. VI, p. 108.

I shall offer it as a conjecture that the name "Clarion" may indicate the family name *Clare* from which Raleigh was said by his antiquary friend to be descended. And another interesting parallel, which further corroborates my opinion that Spenser had lately read and was thinking of Hooker's *Dedicatory Epistle*, is found in his use of the word "silver-winged" as characteristically descriptive of the race of butterflies to which Clarion belonged.

Of all the race of silver-winged flies,
is the first line of the story; and later,

Lastly his shinie wings, as silver bright,

repeats the epithet. Hooker at some length describes Raleigh's coat of arms and "ensignes," and dwells upon the "white colour or silver" and its signification.³⁰

The youthful curiosity and activity of the adventurous young fly, as depicted especially in the fourth and fifth stanzas of the poem, suggest vividly the youthful activity and adventurousness of young Raleigh. The adventures of Clarion are clearly those of a butterfly, yet many times they appear to have a double suggestion and to make one think of the early adventures of the sea-roving youth who earned from the poet the later epithet, "The Shepherd of the Ocean."

Compare:

Whence downe descending he along would flie
Upon the streaming rivers, sport to finde;
And oft would dare to tempt the troublous winde.

The poet having in mind young Raleigh's adventures on the Devonshire coast and his privateering adventures on the sea, could not inconsistently represent his butterfly as flying over the ocean, but he pictures him more than once as

³⁰ Dedicatory Epistle, *Holinshed*, vol. VI, p. 109.

flying upon the "streaming rivers," and as tempting the "troublous wind" just as young Raleigh himself did many a time in his adventures at sea. At least Spenser's use of "rivers" thus interpreted does not involve an inexact reading of Chaucer's technical phrase for hawking, "for river," in *Sir Thopas*, but belongs to the natural picturesque imagery of the poetic conception.³¹

Then Spenser, with young Walter Raleigh in mind setting out at seventeen as a young soldier of fortune, had some other reason for arming his young butterfly than, as Mr. Nadal supposes, that of copying the conventional lines of Chaucer's arming of *Sir Thopas*. Not that he had not a fleeting reminiscence, very likely, of how Chaucer armed his toy knight, and of other conventional armings, but the real vision in his eye, or double vision, was that charmingly elusive one of a butterfly-knight in pure terms of butterfly. Here Spenser was indeed fancy free, and in this is the exquisite charm of the poem which has caught every reader and commentator. But withal there was the added interest of suggestion to Spenser's friends, who knew well the young courtier's "love of exquisite armour." And as we read the description of the butterfly's wings with their "thousand colours bejeweled like the heavens," the envy of all the ladies of the Court, we recall another picture of "gorgeous raiment, lace, embroideries, furs, diamonds and great pearls," which not only the ladies of the Court and the Queen herself did envy, but which more than once caused their possessor annoyance because coveted by someone else.³²

There can be no question that "the gay gardins" or "this gardin" indicates the Court of Queen Elizabeth.

³¹ See Mr. Nadal's article, *Pub. Mod. Lang. Ass.*, vol. xxv, p. 647.

³² E. Gosse, *Life of Sir W. Raleigh*, p. 20.

The definiteness of the phrase is as significant as if the poet had said "the Court" where, as he also portrays in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, Envy had "lately built his hateful mansion."

I do not believe that Spenser conceived the poem in a truly mock-heroic spirit or manner. In fact we may doubt whether he really understood mock-heroic as Chaucer did—as ironic or burlesque imitation of the heroic. He used the device of a heroic introduction, but in all seriousness with respect to his material, and as he used it in other poems. And he bewailed in heroic fashion, in two stanzas preceding the catastrophe, the cruel fate of the "luckless Clarion." He appealed to the Tragic Muse as he had done, in absolute seriousness, at the beginning of the poem when he gave tragic direction to the story. Yet Mr. Nadal says, "There is especially to be noted that which moves through them all, binds them all together, and gives significance which otherwise they would not have,—the mock heroic spirit in which every description, circumstance, and incident of both poems is written." We must save ourselves from falling under the spell of Mr. Nadal's enthusiasm by referring to his parallels from time to time.

So far from being a "mere running frieze of images and scenes, linked together in fanciful continuity," the poem is in all parts clearly related, even in the mythical tales, one at least original with Spenser, which tell of the source and parentage of Clarion and Aragnoll and the cause of the Spider's "vengefull malice." I cannot agree with the several commentators that there is not a marked organic quality in the poem. The narrative moves straight and inevitably from the introductory stanzas. It is not in the least necessary, or indeed conceivable, that the poet in giving allegorical significance to the butterfly's story should tell it in detail absolutely fitting to the person whom he

represents. Such was not his method. The story is charming and consistent in itself, and the allegory is a harmonious unit. It is sufficient and really necessary for so exquisite a theme that the allegorical parallel drawn should be marked only by a general likeness, should suggest only generally the different periods of Sir Walter Raleigh's career, and should bear a general truthfulness to the real situation, as we have found it clearly does. Given, then, the first two stanzas with the poet's avowed intention stated in them, they cannot be ignored—for thereby hangs the tale.

This interpretation of the allegory makes no encumbrance upon the airily delicate conception of the poet. Indeed, the allegorical intention must have given rise to the phantasy of the butterfly, and the idea became fitted to the scheme in an exquisite adjustment, which at the same time gave the poet the opportunity to use the older conventional motifs with freshness and originality. "The garden," the resort of the lustful, joyous butterfly, is only the mediæval garden or list of herbs and flowers, but as the final resort of Clarion and symbolizing with delicate suggestion the gorgeous Court of Elizabeth at its richest flowering, it becomes a vivid reality.

Spenser's plea to Lady Carey in the dedication to "make a milde construction of all things therein" is obviously explained by this interpretation, as it is not satisfactorily by Mr. Nadal's or Mr. Long's. Spenser shows the same concern as in other dedicatory letters, and well he might, about the construction put upon his allegories by his contemporaries. He so far succeeded in his delicately dressed satire of *Muiopotmos* that the poem has ever been, as Mr. Nadal says, a baffling allurement to critics.

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